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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to follow through the second year of teaching a group of 18 teachers who were intensely studied as part of a first-year teacher study. The group responded to a questionnaire designed to reveal changes in attitude toward the following aspects of their work: (1) discipline; (2) relationship to the school principal; (3) relationship with fellow teachers; (4) their own effectiveness as a teacher; (5) feelings about their teacher education programs; (6) interest in teaching; (7) quality of their classroom instruction; (8) ability to respond to problems; (9) feelings about teaching as a career; and (10) feelings about themselves and satisfaction in their work. The responses to the questionnaire are analyzed for similarities and differences of these attitudes held by the same teachers at the end of their first year of teaching. (JD)

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The Second Year of Teaching: A Follow-up Study

The first year of teaching has been described by many as difficult. New teachers have been characterized as idealistic, uncertain and fearful of their entry into the "real" world. Through folk knowledge and professional wisdom gleaned from teachers' accounts of their own experiences, and from others' observations of new teachers' behaviors, teacher educators have come to understand some of the personal and professional concerns which plague teachers during their first year. As new teachers adapt to the school environment they notice that some of their notions of teaching, their attitudes toward students and their pictures of themselves as teachers begin to change. New feelings emerge with new found frustrations, surprises and strengths. As the first year ends some teachers feel accomplished in their abilities as teachers while others feel that if they just "stick it out for another year" things will improve.

Little evidence exists describing the second year of teaching. Professional wisdom has suggested that somehow the second year of teaching is "better", "easier", or "less stressful" than the first. Educators generally agree that "making it" through the first year gives the second year teacher more confidence, better rapport with people in the school setting and more realistic expectations of teaching as a career. But what really happens is largely unknown. How do teachers describe their second years of teaching? What differences do they describe when they compare the second year with the first? What common perceptions do second year teachers share?

Methodology

Purpose: The purpose of this investigation was to follow through the second year of teaching a group of eighteen teachers who were intensely studied as part of "The First Year Teacher Study" (Ryan et. al., 1977). Because little data has been gathered longitudinally about the progression of teachers through their careers, and because strong positive relationships have been established among the researchers and the subjects as part of the earlier study, it was felt that contact should be maintained with the teachers and recordings should be kept of the changes they perceived.

The study was designed with two main foci: teachers' perceptions of their second year of teaching when compared with the first, and attitudes and attributes of self as second year teachers. The areas of investigation for the first part of the study were taken from results of The First Year Teacher Project: reflections on discipline, students, the principal, fellow teachers, effectiveness as a teacher, teacher education program, interest in teaching, quality of classroom instruction, ability to respond to classroom problems and choice of teaching as a career. The areas for the second part of the study were more general: the satisfactions of a second year teacher; the concerns of a second year teacher; and the changes taking place as a result of the second year.

The Sample: Data about the second year of teaching were collected from twelve of the original eighteen teachers studied. Of the six

from whom data were missing, one teacher did not finish his first year, two moved away, and three did not return the final questionaire for analysis. As a result of missing subjects, comparisons made using data collected during the first year were limited to responses from the remaining sample. The remaining twelve teachers completed their second year of teaching and returned all of the instruments. Of the twelve who participated in the Second Year Study, eight were women and four were men. Five were elementary teachers (K-5), three taught in the middle grades (6-9), and four taught in the high school grades. The twelve teachers taught in eleven different schools representing six school systems.

Data Collection: During the seond year of teaching, informal contacts were made with the sample. General questions such as "How has the year been so far?" and "What differences have you noticed between this year and last?" were asked during the phone conversations. At the end of the school year structured questionaires were sent to each teacher. The questionaire was divided into three parts: general demographic data, a set of statements asking teachers to compare the events of the second year with those of the first, and four open-ended questions asking for satisfactions, concerns, changes and attitudes toward themselves as teachers. Both informal and formal data were analyzed and categorized in an attempt to describe a widely divergent set of perceptions about the second yea of teaching.

Results: Teachers Perceptions of the Second Year of Teaching when Compared with the First

During the First Year Teacher Study, researchers were struck by the diversity of attitudes and opinions shared by the teachers. From the results of the Second Year Study, again diversity marked the responses. The results reported here will be stated as general trends toward particular changes in attitudes and opinions. However, it must be noted that responses varied widely among the group of teachers.

Attitudes toward ability to discipline: Following the second year the teachers tended to feel that handling discipline problems was somewhat easier than it had been during the first year. One teacher wrote, "I started the second year stricter than the first and had fewer problems. Another wrote, "Familiarity with environment and content helped. Through experience I've learned what kinds of expectations and limits to set." A third teacher's response was, "There was a tremendous amount of difference in the students I had in the second year. They were much bolder in attitudes, not afraid to create trouble, belligerent, disrespectful. Discipline was much more difficult for me as a result."

Attitudes toward the principal: Most of the teachers saw no change in their relationships with their principal. The principal in many cases was described as a "figurehead" who only dealt with teachers who were having problems. These teachers did not see the principal having any real affect on their classroom teaching.

Attitudes toward their fellow teachers: By not being a new teacher any more, the trend toward being an accepted member of the faculty was more positive. Over half of the sample described their fellow teachers as more personable, cooperative and friendly. They in turn felt they were more able to reach out to others. "Since I wasn't a new teacher anymore, I found myself helping others, both new and old, more than I had during the first year. I felt good being able to return some of the favors I has asked for during the first year."

Attitudes toward their own effectiveness as a teacher: The second year teachers overwhelmingly felt that they were more effective in the classroom than they had been during their first year. Only one teacher stated that he felt his teaching to be less effective. One teacher was able to see more growth in her students than during the year before. Another felt that other teachers' praise of her work made her feel more competent as a teacher. A third teacher had not yet developed a way of judging her own sense of effectiveness.

Attitudes toward their teacher education programs: In general the second year teachers felt that their teacher education programs were adequate. These were the same attitudes they expressed following their first year of teaching. A few described their programs as very helpful and no one described their program as not very helpful. Of the sample, seven of the teachers have already enrolled in graduate coursework.

Attitudes toward their interest in teaching: Most of the teachers in this sample felt that their interest in teaching was about the same as it was during their first year. Though one teacher wrote that "some of the excitement has worn off," three expressed a strong interest in teaching. Three of the teachers also noted that they were definitely less interested in teaching than they had been during the previous year.

Attitudes toward the quality of their classroom instruction: In general the second year teachers believed that the quality of their classroom instruction was better than it had been during their first year. No one felt that the quality of instruction was worse than it had been the year before. "Preparation and ideas come more easily," one teacher wrote. Another wrote that he wanted his teaching to improve each year.

Ability to respond to problems: All but two of the teachers felt that they had markedly improved their problem solving abilities. Only one of the teachers felt that her problem solving ability was not as good as it had been during the previous year. "All in all I'm much more willing to admit there are problems in my class and work out solutions. I'm more willing to individualize teaching and learning to avoid some of the serious problems which arose last year."

Attitudes toward teaching as a career: While many of the teachers felt that teaching was an excellent career choice,

nearly half the sample described their teaching career as only satisfactory or poor. When asked now long they expected to continue in teaching two were undecided, two didn't want to teach any longer and were looking for other employment, two expected to stay in the profession five more years, two wanted to continue for ten years and two saw teaching as a lifetime endeavor. One who described teaching as a poor career choice credited his dissatisfaction to "too much work for the pay," "low prestige," and "petty problems unrelated to teaching but necessary for teachers to handle." Another wrote, "God Bless Summer Vacations" and said "Despite its hardships and mental strain the rewards you can get from teaching are immeasurable." Reasons given for considering leaving teaching ranged from a spouse's job transfer to increased anxiety and conflicts with students.

Attitudes and Attributes of Self as Second Year Teachers

Satisfactions

In the second part of the questionaire the teachers were asked what their greatest satisfactions were during the second year of teaching. The classroom satisfactions reported focused primarily on teacher-student relationships. The teachers indicated that during their second year they created more student enthusiasm and responsiveness. The students worked harder in following through on the concepts and ideas covered in class. In the words of one teacher, "One of the greatest satisfactions was watching several groups of kids perform plays they had created,

rehearsed and organized on their own in response to myths and fairy tales I read in class. To see the kids working together and synthesizing new ideas from ones that I had presented is an example of education at its best." The teachers also reported that students were more attentive and cooperative, were more positive about classroom experiences and did not challenge, as frequently as during the first year, their authority or power.

Three teachers found satisfaction primarily through extra-classroom involvements. The satisfactions they mentioned included:

1) improved cooperation with fellow teachers,
2) enhanced confidence demonstrated toward them by parents and staff,
3) increased professional opportunities (values clarification workshops and outdoor education experiences).

Other satisfactions experienced by the second year teachers were related to increased instructional skills. They felt they could create enthusiasm and interest toward class activities and structure appropriate learning experiences. They could cause students to want to learn more and they could gain new skills themselves through workshops or interactions with colleagues. Only one teacher reported that she experienced no satisfactions during her second year of teaching. She wrote, "My second year of teaching was not that satisfying. This was due to many inter-staff problems and basically because of an overload of (my) coaching duties." All in all, the teachers were well enough established to experience enjoyment from several sources:

personal involvements, relationships with students and relationships with faculty. Each source contributed something, though the degree to which each was satisfying varied depending on the personality and competencies of the teacher.

Prior to their first year of teaching, the teachers reported that they anticipated "being with students" as a primary source of satisfaction. However, during their first weeks of teaching they encountered enough problems so as to feel happy when no problems occurred; just being able to cope with the classroom situation gave them a sense of satisfaction. As the year progressed and their competencies increased they began to derive more satisfaction from relationships with both students and fellow teachers - the number of satisfactions reported (Ryan et. al., 1977) were, in fact, in excess of the number anticipated before the year began. During the second year, intra-classroom interactions were still primary sources of satisfaction for most teachers. The teachers enjoyed working with students and developing classroom activities.

Concerns

In response to a question about the concerns the teachers faced during their second year, only three teachers mentioned being concerned about their relationships with students. Extra classroom involvements and improving instructional skills became more worrisome during the second year. The teachers appeared more confident in their ability to cope with classroom experiences, but some found it difficult to deal effectively with the myrid

problems indirectly associated with classroom instruction.

Concerns of the teachers focused on self, students, and others. The teachers usually voiced their concerns on one of the three rather than identifying all as troublesome.

A majority of the teachers' concerns were with self. The teachers were concerned about:

1. being better teachers,
2. losing their jobs,
3. finding the right mix between family obligations and teaching responsibilities,
4. handling new class combinations (e.g., combined foreign language classes).

Of these, the concern listed most frequently was being a better teacher. They wanted to be more effective in the classroom and do more individualizing and less disciplining. One teacher stated: "Rather than worrying about teaching rules and laws, I tried to teach the children. Sometimes that failed (and) a few kids accused me of not teaching them anything because I wasn't handing out pages to memorize; other kids adored the pressure-free, learning-centered environment."

Five teachers identified as troublesome their relationships with students. Their concerns were with:

1. being unable to forget about students after school was over,
2. keeping students from forgetting material already covered by other teachers,
3. keeping discipline consistent,
4. learning how to individualize instruction,
5. maintaining positive intra-classroom relationships.

The third source of concern came from their relationships with others - parents or other teachers. One teacher was concerned about being able to please parents. She wanted them to think that she was doing a good job and providing students with enriching and positive (not parallel) classroom experiences. Another teacher was concerned about how other teachers in the school taught. She felt that her colleagues were not individualizing instruction: "I became particularly concerned with the extremely un-individualized approach to teaching that seems to be school policy. My goal is to reach out for each and every child, not to fit them into a mold."

During the first year of this study the teachers identified self as the major source of concern. They worried about their competence in teaching a particular subject, in managing a classroom, in confronting discipline, and in evaluating student progress. They also became frustrated with their inability to handle some classroom problems and to enjoy their lives outside the school context. During the second year, the preoccupation with self was still

prevalent. They still wondered how well they were teaching, if they would be able to continue teaching, and whether they could handle the problems indigenous to classroom life.

Changes

The teachers were asked what changes occurred in their teaching during the second year. The changes they mentioned dealt with their instructional skills and attitudes toward teaching.

The teachers identifying instructional skills as a major source of change, noted that they had more of the necessary competencies required of a teacher during the second year. They were more organized in planning and setting up lessons; they were able to handle students better and budget their time more effectively; they were able to structure lessons so that the content was flexible enough to meet the needs of all students. Implicit in their comments was the notion that experience (from the first year of teaching) fostered the skills they needed to be effective during the second year. During their first year they felt vulnerable, lacking skills and spending hours in planning activities. As second year teachers they had confidence in the procedural aspects of teaching. They knew how to pass out and collect papers, how to set up learning centers and group activities, and how to develop lesson plans in a reasonable amount of time.

Attitudinally, many of the teachers reported being less positive and more intolerant of students. They viewed students as being

irresponsible and restless. The teachers often interpreted this shift or change in attitude as a result of shedding idealistic views they possessed during their inaugural year: they were simply being realistic. One teacher, for example, wrote, "I must say I have become more cynical, or perhaps more realistic, in my attitudes toward school . . . . there are so many non-educative concerns that make me feel like little more than a paper processor or babysitter rather than a specialist on education." Some teachers also reported being more bored and less enthusiastic. They became less concerned with being creative and flexible and more concerned with just managing day-to-day procedures.

Teachers who wrote they were more positive during the second year mentioned the following attitudinal changes:

1. more easy going,
2. more aware of the abilities of students,
3. more dedicated to education,
4. more enthusiastic,
5. more independent in planning classroom experiences,
6. more positive about their own teaching,
7. more confident,
8. more aware of the complexities of the teaching process.

The changes in their attitudes toward students often resulted from new levels of awareness about their own abilities. They stopped blaming themselves for their classroom problems and began

to look realistically and objectively at their role in the classroom. One teacher concluded, "My first year I blamed everthing that went wrong on myself and my inexperience as a teacher. Now I feel that was unfair. Some things are truly not a question of experience. My new attitude seems to be: Know the kind of teacher you are, believe in what you're doing, be able to give reasons for your approach and stick to your guns . . . All children cannot learn from all teachers equally well . . . The big thing I've discovered is that you cannot be 100% successful, no matter who you are. Accepting a defeat or two is ego-crushing, but it's to be expected." Some teachers realized that not every misbehavior and failure was their fault. There were some things beyond their control. They may not be able to solve every problem and pass every student but they could try their best to provide an optimal learning environment.

Some Additional Thoughts

A study of the second year of teaching juxtaposed to one of the first year provided us with some new insights and has reminded us of some earlier concerns. Repeatedly we recognized the complexities of teaching, of asking teachers to sort out and describe their experiences, of wanting always to know more about the ways teachers are perceiving themselves in their environment. The teachers in this study were willing and open to share with us the beliefs and feelings guiding them in their classroom interactions. They were careful as they reflected upon two years of teaching experience. Though our data are not generalizable

in the quantitative sense, they do capture a flavor of second year teachers' lives and that may guide further investigation efforts.

The importance of this study rests with its longitudinal and qualitative character. Being able to follow the same teachers from the inception of their careers through the second and possibly many more years of classroom experiences may provide useful descriptions for a teacher's career development. The qualitative dimension of this effort has allowed for a broad perspective. The trust relationships built early in the study has enhanced the validity of the data gathered.

As these teachers grew in their second years we noticed that they began to move away from the fear of teaching and into thoughtful consideration of their own "reality" of teaching. They seemed to gain a sense of certainty though that sense was not always positive. For some the negative experience of the first year continued into the second; for others, difficulties vanished with new students and a clean slate. Though many of the teachers felt that the second year was less stressful than the first, all problems generated during the first year did not go away. Some looked at those problems as challenges; others saw them as reminders of last year's defeats.

Areas described as satisfactions of teaching also were repeated as teaching concerns. While initially this may appear contradictory, further thought suggests that perhaps the interpersonal relationships named as both are those which get the most time

and attention of the teacher. For example good relationships with students are satisfying but negative relationships bring concerns.

The evidence of teachers' lack of commitment to teaching as a career was surprising. Following the second year several were looking ahead for career options. These teachers generally anticipated change. In the first year study two of the teachers had resigned their positions before Thanksgiving. Following the second year, two more were looking for other employment. These data support the notion that a professional commitment for teaching is lacking.

The second year teacher does seem to be different from his/her first year counterpart. Yet haunting similarities exist. Time will tell to what degree the traits identified through this study and its counterpart are part of the teaching career.

Ryan, et al. The First Year Teacher Study, Research in Education. July, 1977, Ed 135766.